

Summary

Newsletter

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Advisory Group

The inaugural Advisory Group, comprising representatives of Commonwealth and State Government and academia, met for the first time in September 2001. Since that time there have been a few changes in membership. The current Advisory Group met on 13 June 2002. Some of the discussion points are mentioned within this newsletter, however, in order for you to keep abreast of the composition of the committee the membership list is provided below:

The Advisory Group consists of the following members:

Professor Graeme Hugo	Director, National Key Centre for Social Applications of Geographic Information Systems (GISCA)
Professor John Mangan	Professor of Economics, University of Queensland
Mr Richard Stayner	Principal Project Director, Institute for Rural Futures, University of New England
Ms Joan Armitage	Assistant Secretary, Regional Policy Services, Department of Transport and Regional Services
Dr Stephen Beare	Research Director of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics
Ms Gemma Duffy	Director of Information and Communication, Office of Rural Health, Department of Health and Aged Care
Mr Geoff Gook	Manager, Information, Analysis and Research Unit, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
Dr Gerald Haberkorn	Principal Scientist, Social Sciences Centre, Bureau of Regional Sciences
Ms Kate Kent	Director, Policy Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Tasmania
Ms Jeannie McLellan	Business Manager, Future Service Delivery, Centrelink
Ms Barbara Middleton	Assistant Director, Community Policy and Research Section, Community Branch, Department of Family and Community Services
Mr Ivan Neville	Director, Statistical Analysis Section, Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business
Ms Dianne Peacock	Director, Participation and Learning Section, Analysis and Equity Branch, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
Mr Garth Pitkethly	First Assistant Commissioner, Productivity Commission
Ms Liz Sinclair	Manager, Regional Policy, Department of State and Regional Development, Victoria

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Advisory Group meetings

The Advisory Group has met twice over the past year. An outcome of the first meeting in September 2001 was that the RRSNC should develop an Information Model for rural and regional statistics which would afford a systematic view of the potential demand for statistics in this field. A draft Information Model was presented at the second meeting in June 2002. This Model now forms the first component of an Information Development Plan (IDP). (The intent of an IDP is to map the gaps between data needs and data availability and thus inform forward work program priorities). The RRSNC draft Information Model was rigorously critiqued by the Advisory Group and members also

undertook to provide written feedback with a view to the RRSNC resubmitting the paper for agreement at the next meeting, planned for November this year. The full IDP is expected to be completed by December 2003. It will be released as a public document and will form the basis of a framework for rural and regional statistics.

At the second Advisory Group meeting members were also presented with a position paper on defining 'rural' and 'regional' geography. Agreement was reached that the RRSNC will continue to develop and disseminate geographically based statistics within the current Australian Standard Geographic Classification (ASGC) which defines rural through the Section of State Structure (SOS) and now provides a different perspective on regionalism through the inclusion in 2001 of the Remoteness Structure based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA).

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Forthcoming activities

The Information Development Plan will assist in shaping the future work program of the National Centre, however, a number of key areas of study have already been identified that will support current research in income distribution, demographic shifts and employment patterns in relation to rural and regional Australia. To achieve this the following activities are proposed:

Increased use of ATO administrative data to produce:

- all sources of income for the general population aged 15 years and over (involves obtaining aggregated wage and salary, own business, investment and other source of income data from the ATO and aggregated government allowance data from the Department of Family and Community Services);
- simple measures of average disposal income (gross income from all sources minus direct tax);
- numbers and gross income of wage and salary earners and persons in their own business to provide a more complete picture of total employment and earned income in regions.
- Comparable information on the characteristics of regional and remote communities across Australia-a minimum dataset of key variables is being developed which will allow valid comparisons to be made between any regions of Australia.
- Other Commonwealth agency datasets will be investigated for suitability in generating regional statistics.

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Taxation Data and Regional Statistics

The National Centre has made further progress in producing regional estimates from the wage and salary data contained within the Australian Taxation Office Individual Income Tax Return database (ATOIITR). Measures of employment and earned income have been derived for small areas. These measures are seen as useful indicators of regional economic activity.

Although the recently released 2001 Population Census data provides excellent small area data for wages and salaries it is limited by its five year periodicity. The ATOIITR, on the other hand, offers data on an annual basis. While the two series are not directly comparable, income measures from the ATOIITR provide a continuing series for researchers who require information on an intercensal basis. It is anticipated that the ATOIITR data will lead to the production of a valuable time series.

The previous newsletter highlighted the release of the ABS Information Paper: Use of Individual Income Tax Return Data for ABS Regional Statistics, Wage and Salary Indicators for Small Areas 1995-96 and 1996-97 (cat. no. 5673.0) that outlined the methodology and results of this research.

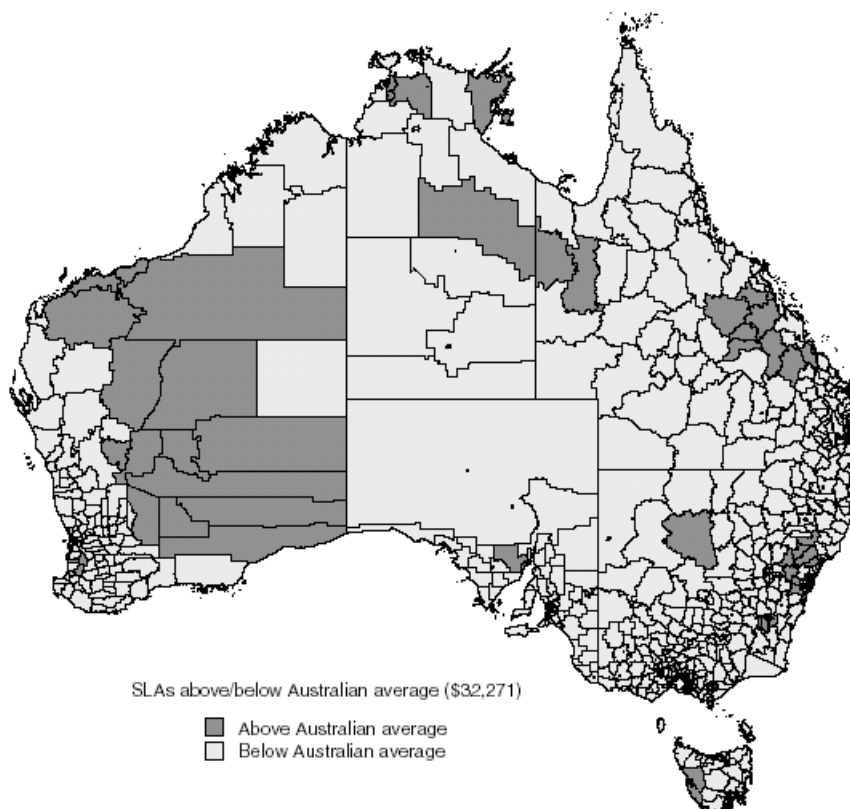
In July 2002 a follow-up time series publication was released-Experimental Estimates, Regional Wage and Salary Earner Statistics, Australia, 1995-96 to 1998-99. This publication contained estimates of the number of wage and salary earners as well as the average wage and salary income for Local Government Areas (LGA), Statistical Local Areas (SLA), Statistical Subdivisions (SSD) and Statistical Divisions (SD) for each state and territory of Australia.

In addition to the statistics presented in the above publications, a range of other data are now available for the wage and salary earner population. Demographic cross-classifications add a richness to these income data as does their ability to be produced annually. Data are available through a consultancy or the tables can be downloaded from the ABS web site.

An example of the comparative analyses that can be generated from these estimates is provided by the following map. At Statistical Local Area (SLA) level the average Australian wage and salary income for wage and salary earners based on the 1998-99 ATO Individual Income Tax Return dataset was \$32,271. The map is shaded to show SLAs as falling above or below this average. Higher than average wage and salary income is concentrated on

metropolitan areas as well as on remote areas that contain significant mining centres.

AVERAGE WAGE AND SALARY INCOME, Australia-1998-99



For further information on this taxation project please contact Mark Nowosilskyj on 08 8237 7358 or mark.now@abs.gov.au.

The first of an intended series of brief Occasional Papers on specific themes intended to highlight the availability of new regional estimates and ways in which they can be used is expected to be released in December 2002. Titled *Selected Characteristics of Wage and Salary Earners, Remoteness Structure, Australia. Experimental Estimates 1998-99* it will highlight both the new ATO-based personal income estimates and the ASGC Remoteness Structure. Characteristics analysed by degrees of remoteness include the wage and salary earner population, age, sex, occupation and income. The application of the Remoteness Structure to these data brings an added dimension to wage and salary income distribution throughout urban, regional and remote Australia and should contribute to studies of regional advantage and disadvantage.

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Regional Statistics Program and Publications

Regional Statistics Units (RSU) have been operating in each ABS Office for several years to improve the availability of regional information. The RRSNC and the RSUs are complementary parts of the overall ABS national statistical program.

A key component of RSU work is the production of Regional Profiles which are generally available for Local Government Areas (LGAs), Statistical Subdivisions (SSDs), Statistical Divisions (SDs) and in Western Australia for Development Commission Regions (DCRs). They are designed to facilitate analysis for the planning and development of regions and to meet a wide range of regional information needs.

Regional Profiles are comprised of a wide range of data from both the ABS and other government agencies. Each Profile contains statistical information on relevant social and economic variables for specified regions. The content of each state's profile varies depending upon the available data sources but generally includes the following:

- social indicators which include time-series and detailed tables on population, employment, education and training, and health.
- economic and environmental indicators which include time-series and detailed tables on agriculture, fisheries and forestry, mining, building and construction, finance and transport and tourism.

- selected region comparisons which compare summary data for the profiled area with other areas.

Regional Profiles are a valuable tool for regional policy and strategy formulation, service provision, benchmarking, business development planning and for a better understanding of the composition of a region and how that region contributes to a state or territory's economy and society.

Profiles for are generally available in hard copy and electronic form. For more details contact the following ABS staff:

NSW: kellie.browning@abs.gov.au

SA: cynthia.millar@abs.gov.au

WA: pam.prince@abs.gov.au

ACT: james.holt@abs.gov.au

RSUs also continue to disseminate new information via their publication series which contain both ABS and non-ABS indicators. The following is a list of the current publications. Please note that some publications have recently been combined with other products in an effort to produce a more effective service.

Recent releases include:

	Cat. no.	Released
Regional Statistics, New South Wales, 2002	1362.1	13 May 2002
Regional Statistics, Victoria, 2002	1362.2	18 December 2001 (final issue)
Now part of State and Regional Indicators, Victoria (cat. no. 1367.2, quarterly)		
Regional Statistics, Queensland, 2002	1362.3	19 November 2002 (expected)
Regional Statistics, South Australia, 2002	1362.4	16 August 2002
Regional Statistics, Tasmania, 2001	1362.6	31 July 2001
Regional Statistics, Northern Territory, 2002	1362.7	3 September 2002
Regional Statistics, Australian Capital Territory, 2001	1362.8	18 April 2001 (final)
Now part of Australian Capital Territory in Focus (cat. no. 1307.2)		

For further information about either the publications or the regional profiles, contact your local ABS Office or visit the ABS web site.

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Where can you find us???

Within the ABS web site we have developed a Regional Statistics Theme Page that contains a range of information from not only the ABS, but also from several other Commonwealth Government agencies. The Theme Page highlights the type and range of data that are available for regional or small area analyses across Australia. Details of recent ABS developments in regional statistics are also highlighted.

To view our Theme Page, just access the ABS web site and click on the 'Themes' button. Then select 'Regional Statistics' from the list. It's that easy!

RRSNC Contact Details

Director:
Claire Conroy
telephone: (08) 8237 7368
email: claire.conroy@abs.gov.au

Assistant Director:
Andrew Middleton
telephone: (08) 8237 7306
email: andrew.middleton@abs.gov.au

Fax:
(08) 8237 7393

Address:

About this release

Welcome to this the second newsletter from the Rural and Regional Statistics National Centre (RRSNC). Since our first newsletter back in September of last year there has been activity on several fronts that will interest those who require statistical information on rural and regional issues.

The demand for information relating to small areas and regions continues unabated. Governments at all levels are increasingly focussing on regional policy initiatives and their consequent effect on rural areas and non-metropolitan regions. It is in this environment that the RRSNC operates.

RRSNC's role is to produce and disseminate data that will assist policy analysts and researchers study the underlying causes of change across rural, regional and remote areas of Australia. This newsletter provides a glimpse of the progress being made in this regard. Our work is particularly intended to complement the regional priorities of Commonwealth Government agencies through the provision of relevant statistical information.

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